

Remarks at a Dinner for the Nation's Governors February 22, 2004

Good evening. Welcome to the White House. Laura and I are honored to host so many of our friends and new acquaintances. The Nation's Governors were the guests at our first official state dinner almost 3 years ago today. It's great to see so many of those same Governors with us tonight. It's kind of like being with members of your family. Right, Jeb? *[Laughter]*

I appreciate the fact that the Vice President is with us. I oftentimes say Dick Cheney is the finest Vice President our country has ever had. Mother always says, "Wait a minute." *[Laughter]* I want to thank the former Governors who are in my Cabinet, Tommy Thompson and John Ashcroft, Tom Ridge, who is not with us tonight, and the newest member of my Cabinet, Mike Leavitt.

I want to welcome the Nation's new Governors, Barbour and Fletcher, Kernan, Blanco, Walker, Tulafono, and Schwarzenegger. *[Laughter]* Last time I was with Governor Schwarzenegger, it dawned on me that we have some things in common. We both married well. *[Laughter]* We both have trouble with the English language. *[Laughter]* We both have big biceps. *[Laughter]* Well, two out of the three. *[Laughter]*

In the past 3 years, our country has faced some great challenges. We're still at war. The war on terror is a new kind of war in which every American is threatened and every level of government must work to-

gether. We've taken vital steps to secure our homeland, and I want to thank the Governors for their hard work. I'm going to continue to work with you to fulfill our solemn duty to protect the American people.

We share responsibility as well to enhance the entrepreneurial spirit so that our economy continues to grow and people can find work; work together to make sure Americans can gain affordable access to health care; to make sure every child learns to read and write and add and subtract. We've made good progress. We'll continue to meet our obligations in future years.

I've got great confidence in America because I believe in the strength of the American people. I've got great confidence in our Nation's Governors because you represent your State's highest ideals and you hold your people's trust.

It's a pleasure to host you all here. And now I'd like you all to join me in a toast to the Governors of the United States.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:12 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida; Gov. Haley Barbour of Mississippi; Gov. Ernie Fletcher of Kentucky; Gov. Joseph E. Kernan of Indiana; Gov. Kathleen Babineaux Blanco of Louisiana; Gov. Olene S. Walker of Utah; Gov. Togiola Tulafono of American Samoa; and Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger of California.

Remarks to the National Governors Association Conference February 23, 2004

Well, that's it? Okay. *[Laughter]* Always love to get a short introduction. Hope you all cleaned the room up after last night.

[Laughter] Laura and I really enjoyed that. Thanks for coming. It was a lot of fun. Everybody seemed pretty well behaved. I